

# *Mount Pisgah A.M.E. Church*

Rev. Jay B. Broadnax, Pastor

**Bible Study, Wednesday, May 4, 2016**

**Survey of the Bible**

**Lesson 63: 2 Peter**

## **The Book of 2 Peter**

The book of 2 Peter is the second of two messages written to a general region (as opposed to a particular city or congregation), intended for public distribution. 1 Peter deals with problems coming from outside of the congregation (i.e., persecution), whereas 2 Peter deals with problems from the inside (i.e., perpetrators and peddlers of false teaching). The Christian life demands attention to the development of certain virtues, whereas false teaching ends up leading people to greed and the pursuit of personal appetites. The writer wishes to persuade the readers of the long term blessings of growing in spiritual discipline and maturity, versus the long term consequences of following the popular and “what feels good.”

## **Author**

Unlike 1 Peter, there is significant skepticism as to the Apostle Peter’s authorship of 2 Peter. The book was not accepted as “canonical” (authentically inspired by The Holy Spirit) until centuries later. There are few references to it or quotes from it in extra-biblical sources (historical writings outside of the Bible) until centuries later, and also there are differences of style versus 1 Peter. However its own testimony as being by “Simon Peter,” its reference to being the “second epistle,” and the author referring to being a personal attendee at the Transfiguration of Christ argue for it being Peter’s own work. Some also argue that the Greek language of 2 Peter is much less refined than 1 Peter, although some of the same terms are shared between the two and Peter’s sermons in Acts. One explanation for the difference in the Greek is that in 1 Peter Silas may have actually scribed it for Peter’s, while Peter wrote 2 Peter himself.

## **The Times and context of 2 Peter**

Most scholars regard 3:1, “this is my second letter to you” as a reference to 1 Peter. If this is so, Peter had the same readers in Asia Minor in mind, although perhaps for a wider audience. Peter wrote this epistle in response to the spread of false teachings (heretical doctrines) that were all the more dangerous because they arose from *within* the churches. These false teachers twisted teachings like “Justification” (the idea of one having their sin atoned for and being declared righteous before God) in a way that enabled immorality and hypocrisy.

It seems that this epistle (like 2 Timothy for Paul) was written just before the apostle’s death, probably in Rome (where he is thought to have died). His death by martyrdom took place between 64 AD and 66 AD.

## **Overview**

Peter wrote his first epistle to encourage his readers to respond properly to outside pressure. His second epistle focuses on internal opposition cause by false teaching and “destructive heresies” (2:1) that can seduce believers into error and immorality. First Peter speaks of the new birth through the living Word, 2 Peter stresses the need for growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ. The best antidote for error is a mature understanding of the truth. 2 Peter divides into four parts: (1) Cultivation of Christian

character, (2) centrality of Christ and God's Word, (3) condemnation of false teachers, and (4) confidence in Christ's Return

## Outline

- I. Salutation (1:1-1:2)**
- II. Cultivation of Christian Character (1:3-1:11)**
  - A. What God has Given us To Grow With (1:3-1:4)
  - B. Building Blocks for Christian Character (1:5-1:7)
  - C. Value of Growing (1:8-1:9)
  - D. The Mandate to Grow (1:10-1:11)
- III. Centrality of Christ and God's Word (1:12-1:21)**
  - A. The Prophet's Call to Remind (1:12-1:15)
  - B. The Message of The Word Made Flesh (1:16-1:18)
  - C. The Eternal Certainty of The Message (1:19-1:21)
- IV. Condemnation of False Teachers (2:1-2:22)**
  - A. Warning against False Teachers (2:1-2:3)
  - B. God's Weeding Out of The Righteous and False Teachers (2:4-2:9)
  - C. Leaders in The Flesh (2:10-2:16)
  - D. The Impotence of Their Teaching (2:17-2:22)
- V. Certainty of Christ's Coming (3:1-3:18)**
  - A. Remember that The Day of the Lord Was Predicted (3:1-3:2)
  - B. What We Are Seeing Was Predicted (3:3-3:7)
  - C. God Will Certainly Keep God's Appointment (3:8-3:10)
  - D. Living Light of The Coming Day of The Lord (3:11-3:16)
  - E. Guard Against Error and Grow In Grace (3:17-3:18)

## Keys to Understanding 2 Peter

- The basic theme that runs through 2 Peter is the contrast between the knowledge and practice of truth versus falsehood.
- The epistle is written to expose the danger and seduction of false teaching and to warn believers to be on their guard so that they will not be "carried away by the error of lawless men" (3:17).
- It is also written to encourage the readers to "grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," because growth into Christian maturity is the best defense against spiritual counterfeits. Believers must not waver from the basic elements of Christian growth, built upon a foundation of faith in Christ's return.
- Peter encourages his audience not to become discouraged by the delay in Christ's return. He uses an exaggerated statement about time (3:8-10) to emphasize the fact that time is really a human construct, and that God is not limited to time and spatial parameters. God can see thousands of years in the same moment. He lets his readers know that Jesus is not LATE in returning, but that God is waiting for US to get it together.

## **Some Lessons from 2 Peter**

- God has given us “everything that we need for life and godliness.” Our task is to deepen our knowledge of Christ – this leads to victorious living, regardless of the ups and downs of our circumstances.
- There are so many things pulling on Christians to distract us from the truly important things in the Christian life. So often the pursuit of things that appear pleasing to the senses (i.e., they look good, sound good, feel good, taste good, smell good) take our attention away from the pursuit of goodness and godliness. Unfortunately we begin to adopt these as measures of our success in life or our quality of life, and they end up leading to corruption. But focusing on attainment in, as Jesus said, “the weightier matters in life” (Matthew 23:23) is what will make our lives count.
- God expects us to be “effective” (i.e., useful and accurate in the use of our gifts), and “productive” (i.e., fruitful, bringing forth a harvest). If we PAY ATTENTION to our growth, fruit WILL come. If we neglect it, we can grow stagnant, our lives will become “routine,” and we risk falling back into past habits. “If you’re not moving forward, you’re moving backward.” (Earl R. Jefferson). What have you done for God lately?
- Our spiritual growth is the best tool we have in these times, with all of the competing philosophies vying for our attention. The best way to recognize dirty water is to be so used to pure water that we can recognize impurity immediately. The best way to be able to discern erroneous teaching that comes from cults and sects is to be so built up in God’s “rightly divided” Word that we can see a “twisting” a mile away.
- God knows how to take care of his own. God can see who’s “faking it” and who’s “for real” and is capable of providing for those whose hearts are committed to God.
- Never say “it’s too late” to do something good, or to pray about something. God operates in a realm that is outside of our human time constructs. God’s timing *for us* is different from our timing. God can find a way to redeem the time.
- The prospects of “The Day of The Lord” should not scare us, but rather excite us – evil will be destroyed with all of its sources. God doesn’t want to scare us into serving God, but rather to serve God out of a grateful heart and out of love. We get to be a part of God ushering in a new heaven and a new earth! How should this knowledge affect our daily lives?